



## CITY OF MANCHESTER

*Joyce Craig*  
*Mayor*

Thank you, Mike, for your kind words and to Bellwether for sponsoring Manchester's State of the City address.

And thank you to the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce for hosting us this morning. It's been a pleasure working with Mike and everyone at the Chamber to improve our city. Whether we're celebrating the opening of a new business or working as co-chairs of the Manchester Business Council, I appreciate, and can always count on, your good advice and good humor.

It's great to be at Fratello's, and I should add, a perfect place for a Valentine's Day dinner for those of you who haven't made plans yet. Thank you to all the Fratello's staff for taking such good care of us this morning.

And thank you all for braving the weather to be here today. Before I was mayor, I only had to worry about shoveling my driveway, but now I have to worry about every street and sidewalk in the city. I'm going through a bit more salt these days.

To the residents of Manchester, here today or watching at home, thank you for the privilege of serving you. I love my job, and I'm grateful every day to work for you.

In my first year as Mayor, I've worked to engage and empower our community to think big, confront our challenges, and imagine what Manchester can be.

One of the many things I love about Manchester is that our residents and businesses want to participate to make our city better. A great example of this is Manchester Proud.

They've committed to raise over half a million dollars to develop the first-ever, community-based strategic plan, to ensure the highest quality education for all of our students. I'm grateful for their partnership, as well as the many donors who are making the work of Manchester Proud possible.

We're at a pivotal time to impact the direction of our schools. The selection of a new superintendent will be key to the educational success of our students, and it's critical we engage our community in the process.

In recent months, we've seen widespread community involvement and strong partnerships from organizations across our city. Because of their work, we're seeing exciting results.

Due to our collaboration with the New Hampshire College and University Council, our school district was awarded the competitive GEAR UP grant. This grant provides \$1.5 million dollars each year for the next seven years. 2,000 students in our middle and high schools will have access to academic support, career exploration, and college planning to help them prepare and succeed after high school.

As a result of a partnership with Velcro Companies, students at West High School just finished the first semester of Velcro University. In this workforce development program, students are learning soft skills, as well as technical training, to better equip them for post-graduation success.

This program has been well-received by students at West, which is **why I'm excited to announce that beginning next fall, Eversource will establish a similar program at Central High School.**

I'm so grateful to Velcro Companies, Eversource, and others for investing in Manchester's students. This includes the work of the Granite United Way and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, who have been wonderful partners.

The Granite United Way brought The Leader in Me, a nationally-recognized leadership development program, to Gossler Park Elementary a few years ago.

**Thanks to the generosity of the Stebbins Family and the Granite United Way, I'm thrilled to announce that this fall, we are expanding The Leader in Me curriculum to all schools on the west side - so it will follow kids from elementary, to middle and to high school.** This program has transformed the culture at Gossler Park by improving student achievement and behavior, and will have a positive impact on west side students of all ages.

Thanks to a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, we're working to expand Project LAUNCH. This initiative will improve outcomes for our youngest children and their families across the city. Aligning with the efforts of Manchester Proud and the Manchester Health Department, Project LAUNCH recently kicked off a five year strategic planning process that will work to ensure all children who enter our school system are ready to learn.

At the Manchester Public Library, we eliminated late fees for all children and young adult materials. And young adults living or attending school in Manchester no longer need parental approval to get a library card, which was a significant obstacle for many students with working parents.

To continue to promote year-round literacy, we expanded summer learning opportunities. We launched the Bookmobile, a partnership between the library and the School District, and have

given away over 2,000 books to children across our city. Together, these actions make it easier for children to access books and develop a love of reading.

As a community, we need to continue to think about ways to remove barriers for our students. Recently, a parent asked me why high school students who take a city bus to school have to pay. **After talking with Mike Whitten, the Executive Director of the MTA, I'm happy to announce that this fall, any Manchester high school student can ride a city bus to and from school, for free.**

While we continue to think creatively and work collaboratively to increase opportunities for our students, the lack of education funding from the State is one of our biggest challenges.

In the last 10 years, cuts in state aid have cost Manchester more than \$50 million dollars. And with a state surplus of over \$128 million dollars for this year alone, it's unacceptable for the state to not restore state aid for education.

Our teachers, administrators and school staff are asked to do a lot of work with limited resources. Every dollar our district continues to lose in state funding impacts our ability to address urgent needs, such as buying textbooks, increasing special education services and giving our teachers a fair contract.

Since I took office, I've been working with local legislators to reverse this downshifting in education funding. This morning, I ask all of you to join me in advocating for more state funding for our students.

If we want to ensure our city thrives for years to come, we must make education a priority. By working together to invest in our students, we will ensure our long-term prosperity.

In the last year, I've worked hard to ensure our businesses are thriving with help from our local government, not in spite of it. And, we've already seen results.

For the first time ever, the City of Manchester partnered with the state to develop a comprehensive proposal to bring jobs into the Queen City. Our work resulted in the expansion of BAE Systems into Manchester, along with up to 800 new, high-paying jobs. Moving forward, we now have a plan we can use to attract new businesses to our city.

To support our revitalization efforts, we expanded the RSA 79-E tax incentive, encouraging more investment in the redevelopment zone along Valley Street. We also launched a new facade improvement program, matching investments made to improve storefronts up to \$10,000 dollars. Through these incentives, we're encouraging growth and development in key areas.

We're seeing redevelopment in the former Cohas Shoe Factory, which will create up to 60 residential units, artist studios and loft space. With the SNHU Parking Garage near Northeast Delta Dental Stadium, and the Hilton Tru Hotel breaking ground on the Bedford Lot, we're seeing the first new development in the Millyard in decades.

To build upon the thriving development we're seeing in our downtown, now is the right time to bring rail into Manchester. Expanded commuter rail will allow our city to experience new

economic development and increase accessibility to employment in the Greater Manchester area.

By expanding public transportation, we can build upon the work our community is doing to attract younger residents to live, work and play in one of the most vibrant areas in our city.

In the next year, we'll see more than 100 new rental units in our downtown area. Thanks to a partnership with the Manchester Development Corporation and the Palace Theatre Trust, we're redeveloping the Rex Theatre, which will add a 300 seat world-class entertainment venue to our downtown.

Through a partnership with Manchester Connects and AARP, we're making our Riverwalk more welcoming – adding tables, chairs and outdoor games. By opening new businesses like The Bookery and Boards and Brews, to hosting festivals such as the Taco Tour, Manchester is living up New Hampshire Magazine's claim that we're the "next cool city."

There's energy across Manchester, and people outside of New Hampshire are starting to take notice. Thanks to the work of the leadership team at the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, United and American Airlines are reinvesting in our community. This year, we will see an 80,000 seat increase in departing flights, directly connecting Manchester to Chicago O'Hare and Washington-Dulles – just in time for the first in the nation primary! When you're booking flights, remember to fly Manchester.

Our healthcare organizations are also growing, and Manchester is fortunate to have three strong hospitals, Catholic Medical Center, Elliot Health Systems and Dartmouth-Hitchcock. In the last year, all three institutions announced mergers and widespread expansion in services and footprint.

All three hospitals have also been active participants in improving the health of our community, including confronting New Hampshire's opioid epidemic. We've made progress in the last year, with help from multiple organizations, including our fire, police and health departments.

The Manchester Fire Department, led by Chief Dan Goonan, is on the front lines of the opioid epidemic. Because of our firefighters hard work and the strong partnerships we have with local providers, such as the Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester, Granite Pathways, Farnum Center, Families in Transition and others, we're starting to see positive results.

When I took office a year ago, it took someone who walked into Safe Station on average 2-3 weeks to get into treatment. Today, it takes 2-3 days. In addition, Manchester saw a 19% decrease in opioid overdoses last year, as well as a 22% decrease in overdose deaths. This is the first time we've seen a decrease in overdoses since this epidemic began.

In the last year our police department has continued to employ modern approaches to fighting crime, utilizing predictive policing methods, hot spot patrols, and strategically deploying resources. Their efforts, led by Chief Carlo Capano, have continued the downward trend in the city's crime rate for the fourth year in a row.

In addition, the police department's efforts with ACERT has continued to receive national acclaim, and I am pleased to share the program will be expanding to help more children this year.

The Manchester Health Department, led by Director Anna Thomas, is continuing to do important work to improve the health of our community. By focusing efforts on schools, neighborhoods and home visits, our health department works proactively. Whether they're in schools doing financial literacy courses, helping parents receive their high school diplomas or giving immunizations, they're rolling up their sleeves and working with residents one-on-one to solve problems before they become long-term health issues.

Despite all of our efforts, there is still a lot of work we must do to help our most vulnerable residents. Since I took office, I've been working with non-profits and residents across our city to help combat homelessness.

While this isn't a new issue, and a lot of work has been done, we must continue to face it head on with a united and caring approach.

To address this problem, I've worked with Families in Transition - New Horizons, the ACLU and Waypoint. I've met with homeless youth and local businesses. I've gone out with the homeless outreach team and participated in Waypoint's annual SleepOut. We've partnered with FIT-New Horizons so they can stay open during the day and make much needed renovations so individuals feel safe while there.

Through my participation in the Harvard/Bloomberg Mayor's Leadership Program, Manchester was chosen to partner with a group of graduate students from the Harvard Kennedy School. Using data they'll work to quantify some of the issues and cost considerations with homelessness.

Our community has the expertise and drive to help those in need. **Which is why today, I'm proud to announce the creation of The Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness.** Co-chaired by Granite United Way President and CEO Patrick Tufts, and myself, this task force will consist of city officials, non-profit leaders, members of the faith community and businesses. By engaging members of our community, this task force will address panhandling, homeless services, capacity and relationships with sending towns.

Despite our challenges, we all know Manchester has boundless potential. And today, our city is working because we're working together.

In the last year, we've encouraged collaboration and fostered a culture of transparency. Our office has created a forum to engage residents and receive feedback through community office hours.

We've worked to make Manchester representative of all who live here. From raising the Pride Flag at City Hall for the first time, to increasing diversity on local boards and commissions, I'm dedicated to continuing to make Manchester a welcoming place.

Whether I'm visiting an after-school program at Girl's Inc., attending a prayer service for immigrants at St. Anne's/St. Augustine's or delivering lunch with Meals on Wheels, our residents know Manchester is a community that cares – and they have a mayor that cares too.

**The state of our city is stronger when we work together.**

It is an honor to be your mayor. I look forward to working with all of you to continue making Manchester a better place.

Thank you.